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Subcommittee passes bill to use voluntary spectrum auctions to establish broadband public safety network, improve efficiency of public airwaves

December 1, 2011

WASHINGTON – In a subcommittee markup today, Congressman Charles F. Bass (NH-02) supported critical spectrum legislation that will promote economic growth and investment in broadband technology, help to reduce our nation's budget deficit, and create a nationwide broadband network for public safety. The Subcommittee on Communications and Technology passed the Jumpstarting Opportunity with Broadband Spectrum (JOBS) Act this afternoon by a bipartisan vote of 17 to 6.

Bass said:

"I was proud to support this carefully-crafted legislation because it meets several important goals in advancing our nation's spectrum policy and expanding broadband access for rural America, including New Hampshire's North Country. It will help to meet our nation's growing mobile data demand, spur innovation and investment in the economy, and lead to the creation of as many as 100,000 jobs.

"The events of September 11th have shown that we need a reliable, nationwide public safety network to meet the needs of our nation's first responders in times of crisis. I've had several meetings with New Hampshire's public safety officials during this process and believe this legislation will help to improve overall communications between first responders in the state and nation.

"Finally, the legislation presents a tangible, bipartisan solution to helping to reduce our nation's unsustainable deficit. With the potential to raise billions in revenue from spectrum auctions, the proceeds will be applied to reducing our deficit – a small drop in the bucket but an important start in getting our nation back to fiscal solvency."

Specifically, the legislation authorizes auctions of spectrum, the net receipts of which – estimated at \$15 billion – will be applied to deficit reduction. The bill also creates a nationwide, interoperable broadband network for public safety purposes by reallocating the so-called "D-Block" in the 700 MHz band to public safety and creating a contiguous 20 MHz block of robust broadband spectrum. The bill provides up to \$6.5 billion in funding for the construction of the public safety network from some of the net revenue generated by spectrum auctions while also creating a governance structure for the creation and operation of the network.

The legislation now awaits approval by the Energy and Commerce Committee before it can be voted on by the full House of Representatives.

-- 30 --

